



Dear Fellow Arkansan,

I was proud to meet with many Arkansas veterans this week during events in Little Rock, Conway, Russellville, and Lonoke. My father and both grandfathers served our nation in uniform and taught me from an early age about the sacrifices our troops and their families make to keep our nation free.

Unfortunately, many Arkansas veterans live in rural areas and are underserved by a Veterans Administration that is strapped for cash and coping with an increasing veterans claim backlog, according to a new report released by my office this week.

[Read my veterans report.](#)

Many veterans in Arkansas must travel more than 90 miles (180 miles roundtrip) to receive care. These veterans currently pay approximately \$2.50 per gallon of gasoline in addition to other transportation costs including the costs of lodging, meals, and time off work.

I have helped introduce legislation that would permanently set the rate of reimbursement for disabled veterans traveling to and from a VA facility at a minimum of 41.5 cents per mile.

The legislation would also:

- Authorize transportation grants for Veterans Service Organizations to provide better transportation service in rural areas.
- Establish Centers of Excellence for rural health research and education that would examine ways to improve delivery of health care to rural veterans.
- Authorize the VA to conduct demonstration projects on alternatives for expanding care for veterans in rural areas.
- Authorize the VA to contract for mental health services for recent veterans. This provision grants the VA the ability to provide these services in concert, not competition, with local providers.

As always, please feel free to [contact me](#) via my website or by phone. I look forward to hearing from you.

With Arkansas Pride,

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